

Original.

## THE RETICULE; OR, THE GIRL OF GENIUS.

BY MRS. CAROLINE ORNE.

— She let it drop by negligence,  
And to the advantage, I, being here took 't up.  
Look, here it is.—*Othello*.

"ONLY see what I have found," said Emma Seymour, who had been to make some morning calls, addressing George Leslie, and his sister, Frances, who sat together looking over some new music.

As she spoke, she threw a brown silk reticule upon the table.

"It was intended for use rather than for show," said Frances, "for although somewhat capacious, it is very well filled."

"Have you looked to see what was in it?" inquired George.

"No, I choose that such an important examination should take place in the presence of witnesses."

"What will you wager, George," said his sister, "that I cannot tell what kind of person the owner is by the contents?"

"Nothing at all, for I can tell by looking at the outside, that like Aunt Mabel, she is a middle aged, sober, discreet woman, and withal very benevolent, for a reticule the size of this must have been made on purpose to carry oranges and lemons and other comfortable things in for the sick, who are unable to procure such articles themselves."

"Well, Emma," said Frances, "put your hand in and draw forth article by article, and I shall soon be able to decide, to my own satisfaction, at least, whether George is right or not."

"To begin with," said Emma, "here is a locket containing a miniature. What think you, George? Here is the likeness of a young man, about your own age I should think, that you will allow to be very handsome."

"It is the likeness of her son," said he.

"No, of her betrothed," said Frances.

"That may possibly be decided by what else we shall find," said Emma, and she drew forth a gold thimble.

"She carries her thimble with her," said George, "that she may sew up a rent in some poor child's frock, or mend some urchin's ragged jacket. You'll find a pair of spectacles soon."

"Only see what a little delicate finger it must be to wear such a thimble as this," said Frances.

"Here comes a purse with a quantity of gold and silver coin in it, and here is a pair of beautiful kid gloves, which have been worn just enough to show that the wearer's hand must have been

as pretty and small as your's, Frances. Here is a miniature volume of poems, and the fragment of a poem in manuscript between the leaves. I should not wonder if she were a *bas bleu*."

"No, the thimble contradicts that," said George. "What should a *bas bleu* have to do with such an implement of female industry?"

"Why the same as others," said Frances, "to shield her finger when engaged with her needle."

"Yes, if she should happen ever to use one."

"Why, George," said Emma, "what makes you think that a woman who is fond of literary pursuits, must necessarily be so engrossed by them as to neglect every thing else?"

"Because the only learned woman I ever knew was, and I conclude she was a fair specimen of the whole class."

"When, and where did you meet with her?"

"Oh, a number of years ago, when I was fitting for college. She was boarding in the next house, and was, it was said, preparing some work for the press. I have actually seen her in the street slipshod, and then her hair—it hung about her face and ears with such a charming negligence. I have ever since entertained so great an aversion to a *bas bleu*, that I believe I should dislike my own sister if I knew that she were guilty of perpetrating half a dozen rhymes or of writing an instructive essay."

"Then, you imagine if a woman accustoms herself to think, she must necessarily be a slattern," said Frances.

"Why yes, it at least seems natural, that if she indulges herself in thinking about subjects entirely foreign from her domestic duties that she will neglect them. I never think of a literary woman, but that forlorn looking slipshod figure rises up before me, that I used to see sauntering along the side-walk with a roll of manuscript in her hand."

"I perceive," said Emma, "that you have imbibed the idea common to many of your sex, who imagine that a woman's whole powers, both mental and physical, must be put in requisition, if she would make a good pudding, darn a stocking neatly, keep her hair from falling over her eyes and her shoes up at the heels."

"No, not quite so bad as that," replied George laughing. "I would have her to know how to read and write and even spell, or if deficient in the last mentioned particular, I would have her, according to the recommendation of Swift, provide herself with a good dictionary. Jesting apart, however, I would, as you know, have a woman well, even highly educated, otherwise the domestic circle would to me have few attractions.

But I would not have her step out of this circle—to do so, is like the erratic wandering of some lovely star.”

“To tell you the truth, cousin George,” said Emma, “you are quite too illiberal in your notions. Now, one of the most modest and interesting women, and at the same time, one of the best wives I ever knew, has cheered many an hour, which I otherwise should have spent wearily, if not sadly, by the delightful emanations of her pen. She was the light and life of her own household, as well as a benefactor of mankind; for so I esteem every person who is able to smooth one wrinkle on the brow of care or sorrow, or convey a moral lesson to the heart, either by their personal agency or written language.”

“Your exception only goes to prove the general rule. I would not marry a learned woman were she as beautiful as an angel.”

“Come,” said Frances, “you have entered so deeply into your discussion, as to give me no chance to play the part of the sybil, which I volunteered.”

“I shall have no faith in your prediction,” said her brother. “I have already made up my mind concerning the owner of the reticule. If we should ever ascertain who she is, we shall find that she is a kind of Lady Bountiful.”

“But what has a Lady Bountiful to do with a copy of half finished verse?” said Frances.

“They will answer for a thread paper,” said George.

“I have no doubt,” said Frances, “that she is young, pretty, witty, neat, industrious and rich. All this I am taught by the contents of the reticule, which are the same to me as the dregs of coffee and tea at the bottom of the cup are to the professed fortune-teller.”

“We shall soon be able to decide whether Frances or I am right,” said George, “for the reticule will probably be advertised in the newspapers.” With this expectation the papers were daily examined, but they could find no allusion to the lost reticule.

It was several weeks after the foregoing conversation, “the season” at Saratoga having just commenced, that as George Leslie with a young man of his acquaintance, stood on the Colonnade of Congress Hall, a sober looking family coach, drawn by a sober looking pair of black horses, in extremely good condition, came driving lazily along, and stopped at the steps of the Hall.

“If I am not greatly mistaken,” said Mr. Hutchins, the companion of George Leslie, that old coach belongs to Mr. Beresford, a rich planter. I have had the pleasure of meeting with

him several times. I wonder if his daughters are with him. He has two, and the younger one, if she is as beautiful as fame reports her, will outshine all our Northern belles.”

By this time the coach door was opened, the steps let down, and a gentleman, whom Hutchins pronounced to be Mr. Beresford, stepped out. Next came a young lady, whom he assisted to alight, possessing one of those superb figures that at once takes the eye, who was followed by a light sylph-like form, such a one as must have haunted the brain of Shakspeare, when he drew his picture of Juliet. “There will be a conquest worthy of you, Leslie,” said his friend, “if you can only achieve it.”

“And why not worthy of you?”

“Oh, I am not exactly the kind of person to suit such a girl’s fancy. I shall not enter the lists. To confess the truth, however, I have already made a conquest with which I am very well content.”

“You refer to cousin Emma. I suspected as much. I thought that all this singing of duets together and exchanging of bouquets was not for nothing. Well she is a good girl, though I sometimes think a little in danger of becoming a *bar bleu*.”

“That will be an additional recommendation in my mind,” replied Hutchins. “I should like a wife that could not only cultivate flowers, but write verses on them, and who could not only make a good tart for dinner, but compose a piquant sketch to regale me in the evening.”

“I should prefer to purchase both my poetry and sketches. Those of home manufacture, like home-spun cloth would be apt to fail in both texture and coloring, unless an undue share of time were devoted to them.”

“Well, you can entertain no fears on that score as respects the younger Miss Beresford, whatever you might of her sister, who certainly looks as if she might know Latin and even Greek, and write essays.”

“Do you know their names?”

“Yes, the name of the eldest is Georgiana, a name that sounds just stately enough for such a superb looking girl. Her sister’s name is Rosalind, which, following the example of Orlando, I expect, before leaving the Springs, you will carve on every tree.”

“I am not at all sure that I shall like her. You know that I am particular,—fastidious, some would say. A woman to suit me must be beautiful in person, have a sweet, well modulated voice—”

"Which every highly educated woman always has," said Hutchins.

"I cannot admit it to be entirely the result of education," said Leslie.

"No, not entirely. Yet the voice will adapt itself to the feelings and sentiments. It appears to me that a person capable of originating a fine thought could never utter it in a coarse, harsh voice. But I did wrong to interrupt you—pray proceed."

"She must have the taste and elegance attributed to the empress Josephine in matters of dress, and at the same time, be as well initiated into everything appertaining to a well ordered household, as the thriving farmer's wife, who, when she has cooked a meal can preside at table. She must be well educated, but not in a way to give her any pretensions to be termed what is called a learned woman. The mere thought of having a learned woman for a wife, makes the blood creep coldly through my veins."

"The same as mine does, I suppose at thinking of an alligator or some such harmless animal. Well, there is no accounting for antipathies. I will request Mr. Beresford to introduce me to his daughters, and I then shall soon find opportunities to introduce you to them, and if the fair Rosalind does not suit you, why I can only say, judging of what I have heard of her many good qualities, and the glimpse I just now caught of her through her green veil, you are doomed not to be suited."

Just as he had ceased speaking, they beheld a young man approaching on a fine horse, that skimmed along so easily and fleetly, as to attract general admiration.

"The countenance of that young man is familiar to me," said Leslie, as the horseman drew near enough for him to distinguish his features, "yet I cannot recall to mind, when, or where I have seen him. Ah, I recollect now. It is the miniature contained in the reticule which Emma found five or six weeks ago, which he so much resembles. He must certainly be the original, and we now, I hope, shall be able to trace the owner."

With this object in view, he inquired of some gentlemen, standing near, the name of the elegant equestrian who had just arrived, but the most that he could ascertain was, that he was a native of the South.

By means of his friend Hutchins, he was very soon introduced to Mr. Beresford and his daughters. At first sight, though he thought Rosalind very lovely, he imagined that same had reported her to be more beautiful than she really was.

This opinion underwent a thorough change before the termination of the first interview. He could not, had he attempted it, have given a formal description of her. He was conscious that she was graceful—that she was perfectly well bred;—that her voice was sweet as the murmuring of the south wind among a bed of violets. He remembered that her smile was fascinating, that the expression of her mouth indicated refinement, and that her teeth were dazzling. He believed that her eyes were black, though once, when she sat in a quiet, thoughtful attitude, he imagined they were light grey. She turned suddenly round to answer some question addressed her, and then he was again sure that they were black. He remembered too something of the delicate tracery of the veins on their snowy lids, and that they were more deeply fringed than any he had ever seen. He could have described her dress better, for he could look at the peculiar cut of a sleeve or a graceful fold of drapery a great deal more steadily than at a face with such soft yet searching eyes, and he came to the conclusion that he never saw a woman dressed with more perfect taste.

Georgiana, the elder sister was an elegant girl, taller than Rosalind, with a high broad forehead on which her black hair was smoothly parted. Her eyes were dark and deep set, her nose slightly aquiline, and her very handsome mouth had a somewhat haughty curve.

So deeply was Leslie absorbed in the contemplation of Rosalind, that he entirely forgot to fulfil the intention he had formed of seeking an introduction to the young man who had struck him as resembling the miniature, as the means of discovering the owner of the reticule. His musings having interrupted his slumbers during the first part of the night, he rose later than he had intended, and on looking from his chamber window, the first persons he saw, were the original of the miniature and Rosalind, her gipsy hat wreathed with newly gathered wild-flowers, leaning on his arm. They were chatting together in the most easy and familiar manner possible, while he amused himself by winding a lock of her rich auburn hair, which had strayed from beneath her hat, round his fore-finger. A feeling more nearly resembling jealousy than any he had ever before experienced, agitated his bosom, and it was well that he had not as he intended, procured the miniature from his cousin, as he might, at that moment, have been tempted to crush it beneath his feet. An hour or two afterwards he met Rosalind and her father and sister ready equipped for a drive, and he thought that she slightly

blushed as she acknowledged his bow. He avoided mentioning to his sister and cousin that he thought he had discovered the original of the miniature, the subject, at present, being so painfully exciting to his feelings, that he did not care to enter upon it, lest he should betray the state of his mind, and lay himself open to their railery.

"Man delights not me, nor woman either,"

he petulantly murmured to himself, as he stole out after supper, to indulge in a solitary walk. The moon was nearly at its full, and objects basking in its unclouded beams, could be discovered almost as clearly as by the light of day. It was only where fell the deep shadow, that the awe and obscurity of night was realized. He had proceeded only a short distance, when he saw several persons advancing in a direction to meet him. He stepped into the shade of a cluster of pines, that they might pass without observing him.

"Am I to be, at every turn, acquainted by that man," said he, as in a few moments, Rosalind drew near with the same person he had seen with her in the morning.

They were not alone this time, Georgiana and a gentleman he had noticed for the first time at the supper-table, were a few paces behind, Rosalind, who seemed less gay than in the morning, was reciting as she came opposite the pines, the following beautiful lines by Percival,—

"Oh, Evening thou art lovely—in thy dress  
Of sober grey I woo thee, when thy star  
Comes o'er the hazy hills, that rise afar,—  
When tender thoughts upon my spirits press,  
And with the whispering gales and——"

He could no longer distinguish the words, yet he still continued to listen, for the melody of her voice was borne back to him on the night breeze. As she passed, her face was turned full towards the spot where he stood, and her hat being loosely tied fell back, half resting on her shoulders, leaving her white brow, which looked still whiter in the moonlight, with its rich abundance of clustering curls, exposed fully to view. When the last sound died away in the distance, pulling his hat further over his brows, as if he imagined, that the dull-eyed Night would peer into his face and read therein his secret jealousy, he proceeded rapidly along a narrow footpath till a sudden turn brought him in view of a small group of persons, among whom, by the flutter of white drapery in the breeze, he perceived there were several ladies. He turned abruptly away, in order to avoid them, when the voice of his sister arrested his steps.

"We have been trying to find you this half

hour," said she, "to let you know that Emma and I have found the owner of the reticule. We intended to have told you after supper, had you not given us the slip."

"Well, who is she?" he inquired, affecting an indifference which he by no means felt.

"You will know when I tell you she is the most beautiful girl at the Springs."

"People differ in their ideas with regard to beauty," he replied.

"Not with regard to what is perfectly beautiful," replied Frances. "I never knew a person to doubt the beauty of the rose or the lily."

"Let me think—Clara Allen is very pretty—is she the owner?"

"You stupid creature," said Emma, "do you think Clara Allen comparable to Rosalind Beresford?"

"She may be in mind, if not in person," he replied. "The reticule belongs to Miss Beresford, then."

"Yes," replied Frances, "by which you see that my prediction has proved truer than yours."

"Which vexes him a little, judging by his looks," said Emma.

The loss of it caused her much uneasiness on account of the miniature," said his sister, "which she valued very highly because of its exact resemblance to the original. She told us that she was on a visit to an aunt who resided in our city, at the time she lost it."

"Frances and Emma have not told you all the news now," said Mr. Hutchins. "Your sister, it seems, has made quite an impression on Mr. Beresford."

"Mr. Beresford," replied Leslie, "is quite good looking for a man of his age; I don't think Frances looks quite matronly enough, however, to become step-mother to his two daughters."

"Why, he don't refer to the elder Mr. Beresford," said Emma, laughing, "he means his son."

"His son? Has he a son here?"

"To be sure he has," replied Emma. "I thought you had been introduced to him, but you certainly must have seen him with his sisters."

There was a magic in these words that, at once, removed the weight from his spirits, which during their walk back to the Hall, a confidential conversation between him and his sister, in which she informed him of certain slight, but to her mind, conclusive proofs that Rosalind did not regard him with indifference, had no effect to diminish.

"One thing appears singular to me," said Frances, to a lady of the party, which she and

her brother had now joined, "and that is, that Rosalind Beresford, who cannot be more than eighteen, should possess all that refinement of manner, which I have heretofore imagined was never attained by a girl in her teens. During that period, indications of the school-girl will gleam out, which we only tolerate on account of the charm and freshness cleaving to the young."

"It may be accounted for in this way," replied the lady. "Rosalind has been educated entirely at home, and it would be no exaggeration to say that there is not a family in the United States, where she could have enjoyed superior advantages, both moral and intellectual. The manners of her father, as you have all had opportunity to observe, are those of the perfect gentleman, which I never knew him, on any occasion to lay aside in his intercourse with his family, in which I have had the happiness to spend weeks at a time. His wife, who has been dead about two years, was, in every respect, his equal. She was highly gifted by nature, while every word—every movement, indicated the highly educated and refined woman. The playfulness and innocent gayety natural to childhood, were always encouraged by both parents, while anything bordering on coarseness or even impoliteness, was constantly checked. Living always in a moral atmosphere so cheerful, so healthful and so pure, and in the enjoyment of every facility for intellectual improvement, I should almost consider Rosalind as an anomaly, were she otherwise than the refined and intellectual being that she is."

The conversation was now terminated by their arrival at the Hall, and as nothing was to be seen of the Beresford family, Leslie followed the example of the rest of the party, and retired to his own room. The next day he was formally introduced to Wentworth Beresford, who verified, by his unequivocal admiration of Frances, the truth of what Hutchins had intimated the preceding evening. In defiance of the oft quoted line of Shakespeare, which has almost past into a proverb, the course of true love, with respect to Leslie and Rosalind, did, for the present, run smooth. The friends on both sides appeared to be satisfied, and the two most immediately concerned, the best satisfied of all.

More than a week after an eclairsissement had taken place between Leslie and Rosalind, he, one day, during a solitary walk, came suddenly upon her and her sister, who were seated upon a rock beneath the green canopy of a large oak. Georgiana was reading, and Rosalind was busy

with paper and pencil, which, the moment she saw him, she hurried into the brown silk reticule, which, since its restoration, had become quite a favorite.

"Why not let me see your sketch?" said he. "My sister frequently amuses herself by copying from nature, and I have sometimes attempted it myself."

"It is too imperfect to exhibit," she replied with a blush, and immediately turned the conversation.

In a few minutes they were joined by Wentworth Beresford, Frances, and several others, among whom was Mr. Allerton, the betrothed of Georgiana. One of them, a lady, observing the volume of poems lying on the rock which Georgiana had been perusing, took it up and read a few favorite passages aloud.

"That last stanza," remarked a gentleman, "is uncommonly fine, but hardly equal to a little piece of poetry I saw in a newspaper to-day, credited to one of the popular periodicals. I will read it, that you may judge for yourselves."

He accordingly drew the paper from his pocket, and as he was an admirable reader, he did full justice to the poetry, which was indeed deserving of all the praise he had bestowed upon it.

"Beautiful," said Leslie, when the gentleman had finished reading.

"There is more true poetry in those few stanzas, than in as many pages such as we ordinarily meet with."

All present seemed anxious to show their good taste by praising it—all except Georgiana and Rosalind, the latter of whom was apparently much more intent upon collecting some specimens of moss, than listening to the poetry.

An hour or two afterwards, as Leslie stood by himself on the colonade, he felt a hand lightly touch his shoulder. Looking round, he saw Mrs. Lawrence, the same lady who had spoken so highly in praise of the Beresford family.

"I am going to walk a short distance," said she, "and if you do not think it will prove tedious to you to spend half an hour in company with one who has outlived life's sunny season, I should be glad of your company."

He replied in language expressive of the pleasure her society would give him, and offered her his arm.

"Your sister," said she, "has just been telling me of something which gives me considerable uneasiness. She says that you entertain a deep and rooted prejudice against literary women, whom you appear to consider a class of female

pedants, equally neglectful of their own persons and every domestic duty."

"I cannot deny but that this is the opinion which the little experience I have had, has led me to form. It is the domestic virtues of a wife that make home pleasant, and these, I apprehend, cannot exist in any degree of perfection, when one half of her time is spent with her books, and when two thirds of the other half her mind is pre-occupied in making rhymes or framing sentences."

"You do not appear to think it possible, that genius and a taste for the domestic virtues can exist in unison, but that the one must succumb to the other. As well might we feel alarm when we see a few flowers springing up in the green pasture, lest it should be overrun by them. To bring the subject more home, what kind of a woman would present herself to your imagination as the author of that fine poetry which we listened to a short time since? Should you imagine her selfish, morose and unfeeling, or possessing those truly womanly virtues and feelings, which cheer the fireside, and are to the hearts that gather round it, what the dew and the sunshine are to the flowers."

"To confess the truth, it does appear to me on reflection, that a woman capable of writing either poetry or prose full of such deep yet delicate feeling, embodied in such beautiful and appropriate language, may, should she choose—that is, if the sympathies of her family go with her—make her home an earthly paradise."

"I rejoice to hear you say so, and you may feel assured that in most instances, a woman that is deeply sensitive, will never neglect a single known duty. If she should, it will arise from some error of judgment, rather than of the heart. It has been said that in many instances, like the waters hidden in the rock, that gushed not forth 'till smitten by the rod of the prophet, genius sleeps in the heart of the unconscious possessor 'till roused by some sharp and searching sorrow. And may we not hope that it often heals and refreshes the wounded spirit, which might have pined and drooped but for its own rich resources? Happy are those in whose bosoms the thoughts which obey the impulses of genius, like the silver rill, gush gladly forth to meet the sunlight, and where, as in the case of Miss Beresford, the sympathies of their own household go with them to cheer and encourage."

"You do not mean to say that Miss Beresford is literary—that is, that she writes for publication?"

"I certainly do."

"Well, she is a splendid looking girl, but between you and I, I always thought she looked a little blue."

"What! Rosalind Beresford?"

"Rosalind! I thought you meant Georgiana."

"No, Georgiana has talent—she sketches and paints admirably, but it was Rosalind that wrote the poetry you admired so much. Now I hope you will not make good your sister's fears, and think less highly of her for possessing the power to embody the deep and beautiful sentiments of her heart in appropriate language."

"If I did," replied he, with considerable warmth, "I should richly merit her disdain. This discovery shows me the fallacy of the opinion which I have been so long and so tenaciously cherishing, and I shall embrace the first opportunity to confess my error."

Rosalind Beresford has now for many years been the wife of George Leslie, and it is said, that he has never, in any instance, on account of any lack of order or taste in his domestic establishment, had occasion to regret that she is not only amiable and lovely, but that she can convey to his mind, and the minds of their children, through the medium of written language, the bright and beautiful images that spring up in her own.